

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD) released the following statement on the first of three federal minimum wage increases, which will take effect July 24, 2007. Tomorrow's increase pushes the current minimum wage to \$5.85 and will be followed by two additional 70 cent increases in 2008 and 2009 that will bring the new minimum wage to \$7.25. Increasing the federal minimum wage was a key goal of the new Democratic majority in Congress, which passed the increase as one of its first orders of business and fought to have it signed into law.

"Tomorrow – when the first phase of the federal minimum wage increase takes effect –millions of minimum-wage earners who work hard and play by the rules will have a better shot at achieving their American Dream. Millions more in Maryland and other states where a higher minimum wage already exists will be one step closer to seeing their wages, and their financial security, increase.

"It has been more than a decade since the federal minimum wage was last increased, and in that time inflation has eroded it to its lowest level in more than 50 years. This means that 5.3 million American workers, as well as the 6.3 million dependents they support, have experienced not just a pay freeze, but a pay cut - in real dollar terms - since 1996.

"As the federal minimum wage stagnated, Maryland enacted its own increase, approving a state minimum wage of \$6.15 that has strengthened the financial security of thousands of Marylanders. As such, the full impact of the federal minimum wage increase will not be felt in Maryland until the next increase to \$6.55 occurs in July, 2008. At that time, 64,000 Marylanders will see their wages go up.

"The minimum wage increase will benefit for more than those receiving paychecks. According to data released this January by the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, raising the minimum wage to \$7.25 an hour by 2009 'would ensure that a family of four with a parent working full time at the minimum wage does not have to raise its children in poverty.'

"This country was built on the American Dream, which promised that Americans' hard work and perseverance would bring prosperity and a better life for workers and their families. In this land of opportunity, no person who puts in an honest day's work should be relegated to poverty. That is why raising the minimum wage was a key goal of the new Democratic majority in Congress, and why we will continue fighting for measures that ensure all American workers can move forward in our economy."

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